



Shire of **Ngaanyatjaraku**
ON A JOURNEY

Council Policy

Policy 1.15 – Community Engagement

Table of Contents

Policy Objective	3
Scope and Limitations	3
Background	4
Guiding Statement	5
Open and Inclusive	5
Mutual Trust, Respect and Accountability	5
Early and Clear Engagement	5
Consideration and Feedback	5
Skills and Resources	6
Outcomes	6
Policy History	6
Amendments to this Policy	6
History	6
Previous Policy	6



Council Policy 1.15 – Community Engagement

Policy Objective

To:

- a) outline the principles for all community engagement activities conducted by the Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku;
- b) utilise community input to assist in making more informed and sustainable decisions; and
- c) use engagement methods that are inclusive, flexible, and appropriate to those participating and the purpose of the engagement process.

The policy reflects the Shire’s Strategic Community Plan Theme, A strong voice representing the interests of the community.

Scope and Limitations

The policy will be supported by community engagement guidelines that provide clarity on when it is appropriate to engage, and at what level.

Shire’s approach to community engagement is based on the International Association of Public Participation’s (IAP2) Spectrum. The level of engagement should be determined by considering the issue, problem or opportunity requiring community engagement, the objectives to be achieved by engaging and the extent that the community can assist Shire Council to make decisions.

The IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum:

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Community Participation Goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions.	To obtain feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.



Promise to the Community	We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge aspirations and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how community input influenced the decision	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide
Example Techniques	Fact sheets Websites Open Houses	Public comment Focus groups Surveys Public meetings	Workshops Deliberative polling	Advisory Committees Consensus building Participatory decision making	Citizen Juries Ballots Delegated decision

This policy will apply to Shire Councillors and Shire staff. It also applies to contract workers, consultants and tenderers who are undertaking community engagement on behalf of Shire.

Community engagement is about involving the community in decisions that affect them in an appropriate manner. It is crucial to the successful development and implementation of effective policies and decisions and for improving services through understanding and responding to the needs and aspirations of the community.

Community engagement does not necessarily mean achieving consensus. However, it does involve seeking broad informed agreement and the best possible outcome for the Shire and community. It assists the Shire Council to build rapport with the community ensuring that they feel their views are being recognised as part of the decision-making process.

The policy does not prevent Shire Council from engaging with the community in addition to any statutory requirements, provided that any legislative timeframes are also met.

Background

Community engagement is recognised as crucial to effective, transparent and accountable governance in the public, community and private sectors. Effective engagement generates better decisions and can deliver more sustainable economic, environmental, social and cultural outcomes. Meaningful community engagement seeks to address barriers and build the capacity and confidence of all people to participate in and negotiate and partner with institutions that affect their lives.



Guiding Statement

The Shire's approach to community engagement will reflect the principles below. They represent the Shire's best practice approach in community engagement. They are not prescriptive but rather are used to guide the development, implementation and evaluation of the community engagement process.

Open and Inclusive

- a) Recognise community participation as a right of all citizens and an integral component of informed decision-making;
- b) Create, support and promote opportunities for the community to participate in decision-making;
- c) Encourage involvement from a wide cross-section of the community using engagement processes that are accessible, inclusive and suitable to the audiences;
- d) Provide openness and commitment to ensuring that the community is well informed about the Shire's service delivery, planning and decision-making processes.

Mutual Trust, Respect and Accountability

- a) Treat all participants in the engagement process with respect and dignity;
- b) Approach engagement from an impartial perspective, free from bias toward any stakeholder involved in the process;
- c) Ensure accountability, accessibility and ethical dealings with the community.

Early and Clear Engagement

- a) Seek early engagement and regularly involve the community in decision making;
- b) Communicate clearly the objectives of the engagement process and provide community members with all available and relevant information as part of the consultation engagement process to ensure informed discussion;
- c) Communicate the parameters of the engagement process (what is and is not negotiable) to participants from the outset, including legislative requirements, the Shire's sphere of influence, conflicting community views, policy frameworks and context, budget constraints, etc;
- d) Acknowledge that planning is a crucial process to deliver successful outcomes and commit to developing and implementing community engagement plans.

Consideration and Feedback

- a) Commitment to demonstrating that all community contributions and relevant data have been considered prior to making any decisions that affect the local community;
- b) Commitment to providing participants with feedback at key stages throughout the project and upon completion, and how community input influenced the decision.

Skills and Resources

- a) Endeavour to ensure that sufficient timeframes and adequate resources are allocated to engagement processes;
- b) Coordinate community engagement processes where possible to optimise resources, ensure efficiency and avoid duplication;
- c) Recognise the skills required to undertake community engagement and provide staff and Shire Councillors with opportunities for further skills development and training.

The Shire's best practice will ensure that the community is notified of the level of community engagement that will be required within the decision-making process and why this was chosen.

Outcomes

The outcomes and benefits of effective community engagement include:

- a) Increased community awareness about the Shire's services, planning and program delivery;
- b) Increased awareness across the Shire of community views and the issues that should be considered as part of the decision-making process;
- c) Increased awareness of the needs, priorities and diversity of the local community, which in turn ensures that the Shire's service provision and planning functions are aligned appropriately;
- d) Increased levels of community ownership and acceptance of decisions affecting the local government area;
- e) Shire Council and the community working together to address local issues where appropriate; and
- f) Potential for time, resources and cost savings for the Shire.

Policy History

Amendments to this Policy

Amendments to this policy require a simple majority decision of Council.

History

Policy adopted: 24 June 2020
Policy amended: 24 June 2020
Policy reviewed: 28 June 2023

Previous Policy

N/A